

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO USIA WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE

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USIAC

EO 11652: NA

SUBJ: VOA CORRESPONDENT MEETS GOI OFFICIAL

1. VOA BUREAU CHIEF MILLER WENT TODAY, JULY 24, TO OFFICE OF GOI PRINCIPAL INFORMATION OFFICER DR A.R. BAJI, AT BAJI'S REQUEST. BAJI HAD TWO SUBJECTS ON HIS MIND: (1) VOA NEWSCASTS AND (2) THE BUREAU CHIEF'S STATUS WITH RESPECT TO THE CENSORSHIP GUIDELINES.

2. IN A CORDIAL 10 MINUTE GIVE AND TAKE WHICH HE SAID WAS "FROM ONE BROADCASTER TO ANOTHER". BAJI ALLEGED THAT THE VOA HAD CONSISTENTLY TIED THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMERGENCY TO THE ALLAHABAD COURT DECISION AGAINST MRS GANDHI, "AND THIS IS WRONG." MILLER REPLIED THAT NO SUCH REPORT HAD EMANATED FROM THE SOUTH ASIAN BUREAU AND THAT HE HAD HEARD NO SUCH REFERENCE FROM HIS OWN STEADY MONITORING OF VOA, THAT IF THIS HAD BEEN DONE CONSISTENTLY HE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE HEARD IT, AND THAT VOA MIGHT HAVE QUOTED AN EDITORIAL FROM A NEWSPAPER OR A NET. BAJI SAID THAT THE STATEMENT APPEARED IN STRAIGHT REPORTAGE AND THE GOI HAD IT FOR THE RECORD (WE UNDERSTAND THEY MONITOR AND TAPE ABOUT 128 FOREIGN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SIGNALS FROM A LISTENING POST IN SIMLA).

3. REQUESTED TO INFORM THE VOICE OF HIS OBSERVATION, MILLER PROMISED TO DO SO (AND HAS SINCE DONE SO ON ONE OF HIS PHONE LINKS). ASKED IF HE HAD ANY OTHER COMPLAINTS ABOUT VOA, BAJI RESPONDED QUITE POSITIVELY THAT THIS WAS NOT A "COMPLAINT" BUT AN OBSERVATION."

4. AT ONE POINT BAJI REMARKED THAT "WE THINK AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING IS DOING AN EXCELLENT JOB."

5. MILLER EMPHASIZED THE WIDE RANGE OF VOA'S NEWS SOURCES, THE SMALL ROLE OF HIS OWN REPORTS AND THE MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF HIS TIME HE SPENT COVERING SOME NINE OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA. BAJI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD.

6. ON THE VOA BUREAU CHIEF'S STATUS, BAJI SAID HE HAD RECEIVED MILLER'S LETTER EXPLAINING HIS INABILITY SIGN ANY COMMITMENT ON BEHALF OF THE US GOVERNMENT REGARDING CENSORSHIP. IN THAT LETTER (RETURNING PARLIAMENT PRESS CREDENTIALS OF DELHI VOA INDIAN STAFFER) MILLER HAD POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BUSINESS. MILLER SAID THIS IS NOW WHAT SEEMED TO BE INVOLVED SINCE VOA IS A TOTALLY GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED SERVICE. BAJI SAID THIS UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCE WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE GOI AND THAT AS A RESULT OF IT THE VOA BUREAU CHIEF'S SITUATION WAS UNDER REVIEW, AND HAT A DECISION WAS PENDING ON WHETHER HE COULD BE GRANTED EXEMPTION FROM SIGNING. HE SAID MILLER WOULD HEAR IN A DAY OR TWO AND THEY PARTED AMICABLY.
GILMORE

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